

# OPINION LEADERS IN INFLUENCE MARKETING AS INNOVATIVE INSTRUMENT OF BRAND PROMOTION AND DIGITALIZATION

OLENA BILOVODSKA, DARIA KULIK

**Abstract.** In article it is investigated the modern instrument to promoting the goods and services based on involvement of famous people to brand's advertizing. Possible advantages and disadvantages of using this tool are analysed. Opinion leaders types, recommendations for their searching and cooperating, the address purposes to promoting through the opinion leaders are also designated.

The scientific novelty consists of the system researching the essence, features, advantages and disadvantages during the work with opinion leaders at promoting to brands and the recommendations for prevention of problems in work.

The relevance of this research is defined by the fact that at the present stage of the developed consumption it is harder and harder to win consumer attention, as demands emergence of the new marketing methods and tools directed to individual approach to consumers. One of such innovations is promotion of goods and services through opinion leaders. Such approach is based on trust of the consumer to the media personality, as opposed to traditional advertizing that is broadcast on wider target audience.

**Keywords:** opinion leaders, influence marketing, brand, inflyuenser, advertizing campaign

## Introduction

Digitalization gains the increasing steam, annually there are more and more new methods and instruments of advance which need to be analyzed. For this reason rapid development of advertizing through the opinion leaders (influencers) needs the detail studying that will allow to managers to save a brand of means, without being spent for the canal of advertizing most expensive today, for example, TV and to have ambassador of brands which will be associated directly at consumers with a brand and will create loyalty to it at the subconscious level.

The purpose of article is the analysis of influence marketing as instrument to promoting the brand through opinion leaders and identification of its main problems and advantages. It is possible to distinguish from tasks to mastering knowledge and aspects of opinion leaders as marketing tool and acquaintance with advantages and disadvantages of such tool, for the sake of carrying out effective advertizing campaigns in the future.

Term "the opinion leaders" was published in 1955 in the book by P. Lazarsfeld, E. Katz "Private influence" [10]. The main conclusion was the definition of mass media influence to strengthen in voter's confidence in correctness of the choice. It was the most important result of the research. Also for forming and promoting this concept was given such researchers as R. Merton, Ch. Wright Mills and B. Berelson whose researches explain the information transfer mechanism for specific audience [5], [6], [8].

P. Lazarsfeld's idea, gained further development thanks to Merton who in 1948 during the research of interpersonal influence and communication behavior of the population in the small American

city differentiated two types of opinion leaders, local and cosmopolitan [5].

People who live in one area rather long time, skilled in daily affairs (career, education) were local leaders. To them neighbors, friends and acquaintances come for council or consultation. While, cosmopolitan leaders rather moved recently to this city. They traveled all over the world much and owned rich foreign experience, therefore they understood national and international problems (policy, fashion, world business). Representatives of both types actively read the press, however "cosmopolitans" study mainly national press, and local leaders revise local editions from time to time. However, the typology of P. Merton, though keeps the value in the conditions of local communities, but in the conditions of globalization, is of quicker historical interest [5].

The second classification was division into monomorphic and polymorphic. Monomorphic influential people are experts in narrow area or the sphere of the professional competence, and their influence does not extend to other spheres of decision-making. It is accepted to call the second group of influential people polymorphic leaders that they can influence the public in the wide range of areas, using interpersonal communications and contacts [5].

So, opinion leaders are divided:

- local – leaders of narrow groups;
- cosmopolitan – leaders intergroup or large communities.
- monomorphic – leaders, influential experts in narrow area, their leadership has no broad value;
- polymorphic – leaders, the areas influencing the public in the wide range.

Also in practical activities of the companies such researchers as D. Andreyeva, L. Sauzern, D. Samoylenko and others were engaged in issues of influence marketing development, its application. They considered and analyzed development of social networks in the present, in particular features of Internet advertizing by means of opinion leaders.

D. Andreyeva pays attention to approaches to involvement the opinion leaders to business and their efficiency in carrying out advertizing campaign [4].

L. Sauzern concentrated more attention on the advertizing on trends studying of blockers using (programs that silt advertizing or stop it at all in display on a web resource) [9].

D. Samoylenko, the regional manager of the company publikfast, long time studied nuances of work with opinion leaders and formulated five steps which need to be made to a successful campaign with them: planning, choice of the opinion leaders, drawing up brief, testing of product / service and writing of posts [7].

Trends in the world constantly change therefore it is impossible to call researches full in the sphere influence of marketing, they always need adaptation to new conditions.

### **I. Influence marketing and opinion leaders: essence and features**

Influence marketing is a progressive trend of the last years and new philosophy of promoting to products and services. The authority of popular and honorable persons of the brand's target audience is the heart of influence marketing. The recommendations of inflyuenser are perceived more kindly, than

the advertizing received from traditional channels.

Opinion leaders are usually public figures, in simple terms, whose opinion the public listens. The opinion of such people influences the course of the discussed subjects, to their opinion listen, trust them, their choice is appreciated.

The concept influencer came from the West where it was fixed for a long time and occupies a separate niche of business. The direction earns 6-8 billion dollars from advertizing, and figures continue to grow actively. All because 70% of users of Internet network prefer to choose goods on the basis of the recommendations opinion leaders that in the last brings quite good income. The inflyuenser is also leader who keeps the page in social networks and by means of it will organize communications with clients who loyally perceive even advertizing offers from the author of resource. For the advertiser it is the separate direction of receiving traffic. At correctly picked up opinion leaders, the brand accurately gets on the target audience [1].

Any charismatic, public and the famous person can be the leader of opinion:

- popular bloggers (Katya Klepp, Ruslan Usachev)
- stars of show business, sport, actors for those who are interested in these spheres (Keith Moss, Monatik)
- leaders of professional communities;
- prosumers.

The opinion leaders influences by means on emotions or rational arguments, causing trust and a response from people which find in his words and actions compliance with the internal problems and hopes.

Influence marketing can be used in all existing to digital channels of communication: social networks, e-mails, messengers. According to a research hubspot, 71% of active Internet users make the decision concerning purchase thanks to social media [11]. Now it is a trend and the reason of significant changes in the world of advertizing. Using such marketing, successful brands can improve reputation, thanks to authoritative opinion of bloggers and to honest responses.

Opinion leaders differ from all other consumers:

- ability to allocate main and essential in a flow of information;
- belief in need of personal growth and inevitability of changes;
- aspiration to harmony with and the world around [2].

## **II. Opinion leaders in advertizing campaigns**

Using the media persons in the advertizing campaigns is a reception, despite the stereotype still, gets a response from target audience and can show high efficiency. For this purpose it is necessary to pick up the media person correctly. Emergence of a celebrity in advertizing allows to make a product more desirable for consumers. The main idea of similar advertizing approach is an opportunity to draw attention of audience to a product by means of a celebrity, to play on its popularity.

The first step of any advertizing campaignis development is to statement its purposes. As a rule,

influence marketing it is less about sale and more about growth of brand's recognition and noise creation. However the purposes have to be measurable.

After decided on the purposes, it is necessary to elect opinion leaders whom there is desire to attract, and to investigate their target audience. Authorities among consumers of goods area will help to find search engines or social networks. For example, search of cars will yield results on automobile blogs. It is also possible to conduct market researches which will define influential persons among your audience. It is necessary to choose several authoritative people, and then to select those who will better solve the whole campaigns [3].

After that it is necessary to analyse where opinion leaders and their audience gather as they communicate. Careful studying of advantages of users and authorities will help to increase organic coverage. On the basis of data it is possible to construct a marketing campaign [3].

Opinion leaders extend the influence by means of avalanche effect, similar such type of psychological influence as infections: they speak to somebody, those in turn – another one, and in this process involves rather large number of people. Many businessmen consider that process of transfer of opinions about goods or service is similar to relay, namely: the companies give consumers information, consumers transfer it then as a baton to someone to another further. But concerning opinion leaders this scheme does not work. Decisions are made only through discussion in group. Opinion leaders is a driving force in creation of the markets for initiatives, the ideas, messages, goods and services [2].

### **III. Advantages and disadvantages of influence marketing**

The purposes which are set by brands at cooperation with opinion leaders can be reduced to the following:

- increase in awareness of audience on a brand (brandawareness),
- education of audience (her knowledge of rather concrete type of goods),
- improvement of indicators of search delivery,
- demonstration of methods of application of a product,
- increase in number of subscribers and attraction on social networks of a brand,
- reduction of a negative (denial by opinion leaders of bad reviews or characteristic on a product),
- increase in sales of goods,
- increase in consumer confidence.

Opinion leaders constantly "filter" a large flow of information in their minds and determine for themselves what is important to them and what is not. The choice, as a rule, corresponds to their views that is the main feature of opinion leaders. They believe that it is possible to control the destiny (it is one of explanations of their activity) at certain effort, define the personal purposes and without obsession reach them, feel responsibility to people around, are ready to help is less successful, assert the civil rights, are convinced, as one reasonably acting person can change the world. With all the advantages, abilities, beliefs opinion leaders a little excentric, they can have paradoxical an opinion on a number of

questions. They are sufficiently sure of themselves to go on life own way, and it is one of the reasons why people around address them for councils. At the time of changes people look for a reference point - the one who was ahead of them who found and identified problems, solved them in the life who can offer a piece of good advice, the one to whom they trust [2].

Influence marketing can be applied any business. However there are some of most popular spheres where inflyuenser to meet very often. First, it is a beauty segment. Nearly each brand of cosmetics, means of hygiene or spirits involves in advertizing of the opinion leaders. The matter is that here it is just accurately possible to show communication of a product with the person. The inflyuenser within advertizing campaign can try this product on himself, causing thereby associations of communication with the consumer. Too most with a fashion segment where the opinion leaders can try on on himself objects of clothes and recommend thus a brand.

When some goods or a product praise the famous person, its audience begins to be positive too to a product as it trusts this inflyuenser. If your favourite autoblogger, relying on the expert opinion, praises this or that car, then and your relation to this car most likely will become positive.

However, that there was no opinion that influence marketing is the omnipotent instrumenr and it suits to all, it is possible to define several problems. First, it is harder and harder to find a conscientious inflyuinser with "live" audience. Often opinion leaders behave irresponsibly, provide low-quality advertizing integration, thereby reducing effectiveness of a campaign. Therefore it is necessary to approach intelligently search of the leader, to investigate the market and behavior of a inflyuenser concerning other advertizing campaigns.

Secondly, it is impossible to keep track precisely of advertizing efficiency in comparison with other channels. Very often demand is delayed, and a purchase cycle long. Therefore, investing in an influence rmarketing, you can not always precisely know, your advertizing campaign is how effective. There are several options as it was possible to trace how productive integration. For example, it is possible to enter a special promo code for a discount from the specific leader and then you will be able to see how many new clients you managed to attract. It is also possible to conduct survey among clients with the subject "as you learned about us". Anyway, if the campaign was effective, you have to see it, but if there were no changes, then here it is already necessary to think of change of the inflyuenser.

Thirdly, growth of cost and decrease in advertizing efficiency because subscribers learned to the inflyuenser for promoting to the product. The businessman got used today to a strict framework of advertizing which limits opinion leaders in freedom of creativity. To learn to use correctly the inflyuenser, it is necessary to analyze and watch much as other brands cooperate. Thanks to it you will be able to adopt the best ideas and to create the perfect campaign. But if you have no understanding how to make effective integration, then involvement of the specialist about influence by marketing will be the best decision.

The hidden format of advertizing does not suit users of social networks which want to understand whether really the opinion leaders uses this product or paid it and even if the product was not pleasant to it, he all the same recommends it. Because of it some countries, for example, the USA,

entered new laws which oblige bloggers to publish marks about advertizing in the publications. It brings to a new problem, but already for marketing specialists: They worry that because of it advertizing integration has any more no opportunity to be hidden, and therefore users will have an analog of "a banner blindness" (ignoring of advertizing posts).

With one more problem the damage of reputation of a brand or its products at immoral or illegal acts of the opinion leaders can be caused. Also advertisers against cardinal change of image of a inflyuenser which can do much harm wished insult of a product. Sometimes communication between a brand and the opinion leaders can become aggravated and provide in this plan to early cancellation of cooperation that bears negative consequences for a brand and for a inflyuenser whose reputation in the advertizing sphere will be questionable.

**Table 1. Advantages and disadvantages of influence marketing as instrument to the promoting of brand through opinion leaders**

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
low price in comparison with other channels of advertizing	complexity of search of a conscientious inflyuenser with "live" audience
very high level of accuracy in the choice of audience for influence and interaction (choosing the blogger, you choose his audience for the direction of the advertizing message)	impossibility of exact tracking of advertizing efficiency in comparison with other channels
an opportunity to receive fast and qualitative feedback from target audience (a response, the comment)	possibility of drawing damage of reputation of a brand or its products at immoral or illegal acts of the opinion leaders
increase in loyalty of audience	growth of cost and decrease in advertizing efficiency

Thus, cooperation of "opinion leaders" with the companies in advertizing or in other channels of advance, provides involvement of people who are already familiar to general public and with whom the customer intends to cooperate. All partnership with celebrities is important to increase the value of communications thanks to association with image and reputation of a concrete celebrity.

### **Conclusions**

Influence marketing plays an important role at each stage of a travel of the client. It is embodied in content, the involvement and unities of community. Its integration in the organization allows to conduct a client experiment in the center of uniform strategy. Forming with authorities of the long-term and qualitative relations will be the influence marketing key to success in the near future. This approach will provide growth of sales, satisfactions and devotion of clients.

Every year this indicator will grow, as well as extent of influence of opinion leaders on the consumer. In spite of the fact that influence marketing appeared in Ukraine relatively recently, it

actively develops and it is difficult to find at least one big brand which did not take part in such advance.

So, on the basis of the conducted research it is possible to note that influence marketing becomes more relevant every year. If intelligently and strategy to approach this tool, then it is possible to conduct quite effective advertizing campaign of the brand. Further researches have to be directed to development of the effective mechanism of control of this instrument of communications at promoting to brands.

## References

1. Influencers. Opinion leaders. URL : [https://ideyne.com/ua/article/inflyuenseri\\_lideri\\_mnenii](https://ideyne.com/ua/article/inflyuenseri_lideri_mnenii) [in Ukrainian].
2. Opinion leaders: socio-psychological aspects of work in PR. URL : <http://ukrefs.com.ua/print:page,1,111241-Lidery-mneniiy-social-no-psihologicheskije-aspekty-raboty-v-PR.html> [in Ukrainian].
3. Influence marketing URL : <https://smmplanner.com/blog/marketing-vliyaniya/> [in Russian].
4. How and why to collaborate with opinion leaders. URL : <https://webpromoexperts.com.ua/blog/kak-izachem-sotrudnicat-s-liderami-mnenij/> [in Russian].
5. Merton R. Social Theory and Social Structure. 2006. URL : [http://shagpro.ru/sites/default/files/documents/merton\\_socialnaya\\_teorija\\_i\\_socialnaya\\_struktura\\_.pdf](http://shagpro.ru/sites/default/files/documents/merton_socialnaya_teorija_i_socialnaya_struktura_.pdf) [in Russian].
6. Mills R. The Power Elite. M., 1959. URL : [https://historylib.org/historybooks/Mills-R\\_Vlastvuyushchaya-elita/](https://historylib.org/historybooks/Mills-R_Vlastvuyushchaya-elita/) [in Russian].
7. Samoilenko D. 5 steps to a successful campaign with opinion leaders. URL : [http://forbes.net.ua/explain/startup\\_and\\_business/1409725-5-shagov-k-uspeshnojkampanii-s-liderami-mnenij](http://forbes.net.ua/explain/startup_and_business/1409725-5-shagov-k-uspeshnojkampanii-s-liderami-mnenij) [in Russian].
8. Berelson B., Steiner G., Albert G. Human behavior: An inventory of scientific findings. New York : Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964. 712 p. [in English].
9. Lucinda Southern. Study: More than half of all adblocker users would disable them to read content. URL : <https://digiday.com/uk/latest-ad-blocking-report-findshalf-disable-blockers-read-content/> [in English].
10. Katz E., Lazarsfeld P. Personal influence: the part played by people in the flow of mass communications. 2nd ed. New Brunswick, N. J. : Transaction Publishers, 2006. 400 p. [in English].
11. 71% More Likely to Purchase Based on Social Media Referrals. URL: <https://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/30239/71-more-likely-to-purchase-based-on-social-media-referrals-infographic.aspx> [in English].

**Note about Authors:**

**Olena Bilovodska**, Doctor of Economics, Associate Professor, Professor of Department of Economic Cybernetics and Marketing, Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design, Kyiv, Ukraine; [alenabel79@gmail.com](mailto:alenabel79@gmail.com)

**Daria Kulik**, student in Master Program “Communicational Marketing”, Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design, Kyiv, Ukraine; [dashatixonovaa@gmail.com](mailto:dashatixonovaa@gmail.com)

**Acknowledgements**

The publication contains the results of studies conducted within the project “Development of commercialization mechanism of innovative products” (№ SR 0118U003572).